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SUBJECT: DUTCH WILL ASK U.S. TO JOIN FRIENDS OF SUDAN GROUP

1. Dutch Director for Africa Roeland van de Geer and Marieke van Renssen, Acting Sudan desk officer, told emboffs in separate meetings today that the GONL intends to invite the US to join a "Friends of Sudan" group to assist in the post-crisis reconstruction of the Darfur region. The Dutch will also ask the UK and Norway to join. The Dutch mission to Sudan will approach the US and UK embassies in Khartoum regarding membership as early as this week. The MFA,s Deputy Director for Africa Norbert Braakhuis will also discuss membership with Special Advisor for Sudan Mike Ranneberger on July 28.

2. Van de Geer told econoff that he and Minister of Development Agnes van Ardenne are preparing the group's "terms of reference." They will form the group in Khartoum late the week of July 26 or early the week of August 2. He suggested the group could then begin planning a &joint donor approach8 for Darfur. Membership would not be limited to The Netherlands, Norway, UK and US, but could eventually include other donor nations.

3. Speaking in an interview earlier this week, van Ardenne announced she would allocate 100 million Euros for Darfur reconstruction which, according to van Renssen, would be made available after a North-South peace agreement. At the same time, van Ardenne floated the idea of forming a "Friends of Darfur" group to raise money and, with the Sudanese government, coordinate expenditures for Darfur reconstruction. Van Ardenne said she hopes the prospect of post conflict assistance will persuade warring parties to return to the negotiating table.

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SOBEL